

Maritime Threat Report

02nd – 08th October 2021

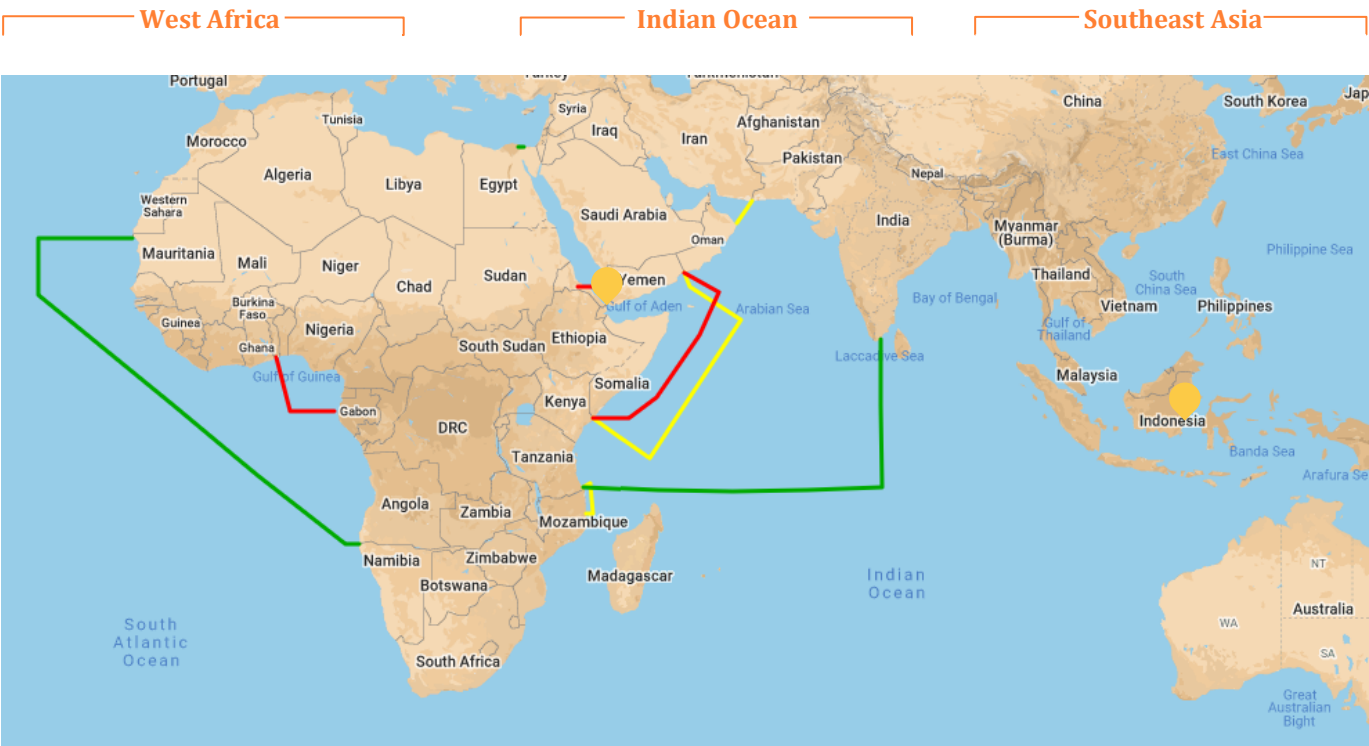


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Global Overview – This Reporting Period

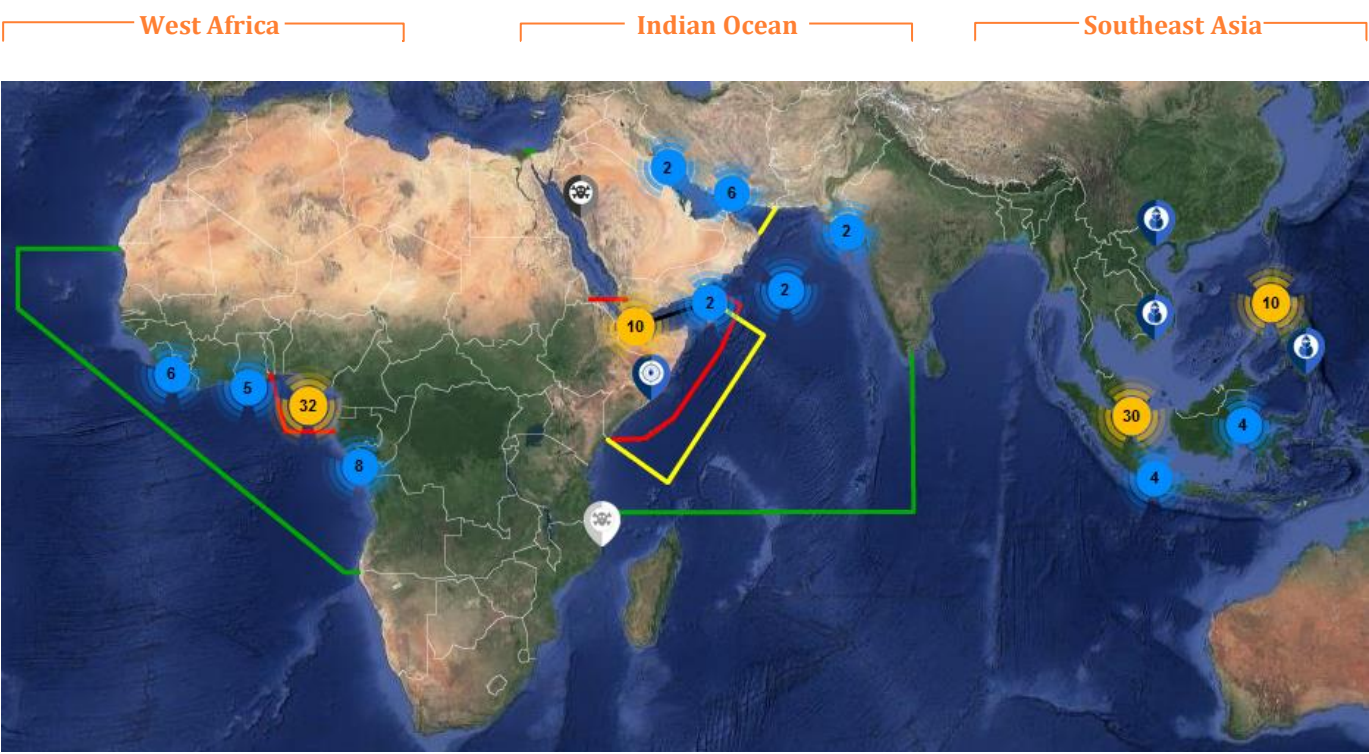


No incidents were recorded

One incident was recorded:
1 – Suspicious Approach

One incident was recorded outside
the reporting period:
1 – Illegal Boarding

Global Overview – 2021



51 incidents recorded:

- 16 – Suspicious Approaches/Activity
- 15 – Robberies
- 10 – Illegal Boardings
- 5 – Kidnappings
- 4 – Attacks
- 1 – Hijacking

27 incidents recorded:

- 11 – Suspicious Approaches/Activity
- 8 – Terrorist Attacks
- 4 – Illegal Boardings
- 3 – Robberies
- 1 – Attack

51 incidents recorded:

- 31 – Robberies
- 19 – Illegal Boardings
- 1 – Suspicious Approach

Executive Summary

Indian Ocean

One additional maritime security incident was recorded within the reporting period.

- On 04th October, a skiff with eight to nine POB approached an underway MT approximately 15nm west of Dhubab, offshore Yemen, whilst transiting the TSS area of the Strait of Bab el Mandeb.
- On 06th October, the Saudi-led Coalition announced that their forces had intercepted and subsequently destroyed three BBIEDs in the Southern Red Sea, suspected to have been launched from Yemen's Hodeidah governorate.

Gulf of Guinea

No additional maritime security incidents or announcements were recorded within or outside the reporting period.

- On 05th October, the UK Royal Navy deployed its HMS TRENT patrol vessel to the GoG to participate in the French-led multinational 'Exercise Grand African Nemo'.

Southeast Asia

One additional maritime security incident was recorded outside the reporting period.

- On 21st September, a single perpetrator attempted to board an oil/chemical tanker in the Makassar Strait, offshore Indonesia. However, upon sighting a crew member, an alarm was raised and the perpetrator abandoned the vessel.
- During the reporting period, tensions continued to escalate between China and other international players in the South China Sea.



Indian Ocean – Analysis

Within the reporting period:

04th October – Suspicious Approach – MT –
Approx. 15nm W Dhubab – Offshore Yemen –
12° 53 N / 043° 10 E – 0750 LT / 0450 UTC

Outside the reporting period:

NIL

Incident Summary

04th October – A skiff with eight to nine persons on board (POB) reportedly approached an underway crude oil tanker (details withheld) approximately 15nm west of Dhubab, offshore Yemen, in the Strait of Bab el Mandeb, at around 0750hrs local time (0450hrs UTC). The skiff came to within 0.1nm at its closest point of approach, but later abandoned its pursuit after the vessel's embarked Armed Security Team (AST) displayed their weapons. The crew and vessel were reported as safe.

Analysis

The 04th October suspicious approach marks the fourth such incident recorded in the Southern Red Sea/Strait of Bab el Mandeb year-to-date, and the second suspicious approach over the last three-week period in the same seas areas. Details regarding the incident indicate that whilst transiting through the Strait's Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) area, a crude oil tanker (details withheld) sighted a skiff with eight to nine persons on board (POB) approaching towards the vessel from the port beam. The skiff proceeded to pass along the vessel's stern at a distance of 0.5 nautical miles, before edging in closer to approximately 0.1 nautical miles, prompting the Master of the vessel to employ anti-piracy and Best Management Practices (BMPv5) procedures, including increasing the tanker's speed. Concurrently, the vessel's embarked Armed Security Team (AST) displayed their weapons during the skiff's closest point of approach (CPA), while those on board subsequently abandoned their pursuit and withdrew from the immediate area. The crew and vessel were reported as safe.

The incident closely resembles an earlier suspicious approach reported by an MV (details withheld)

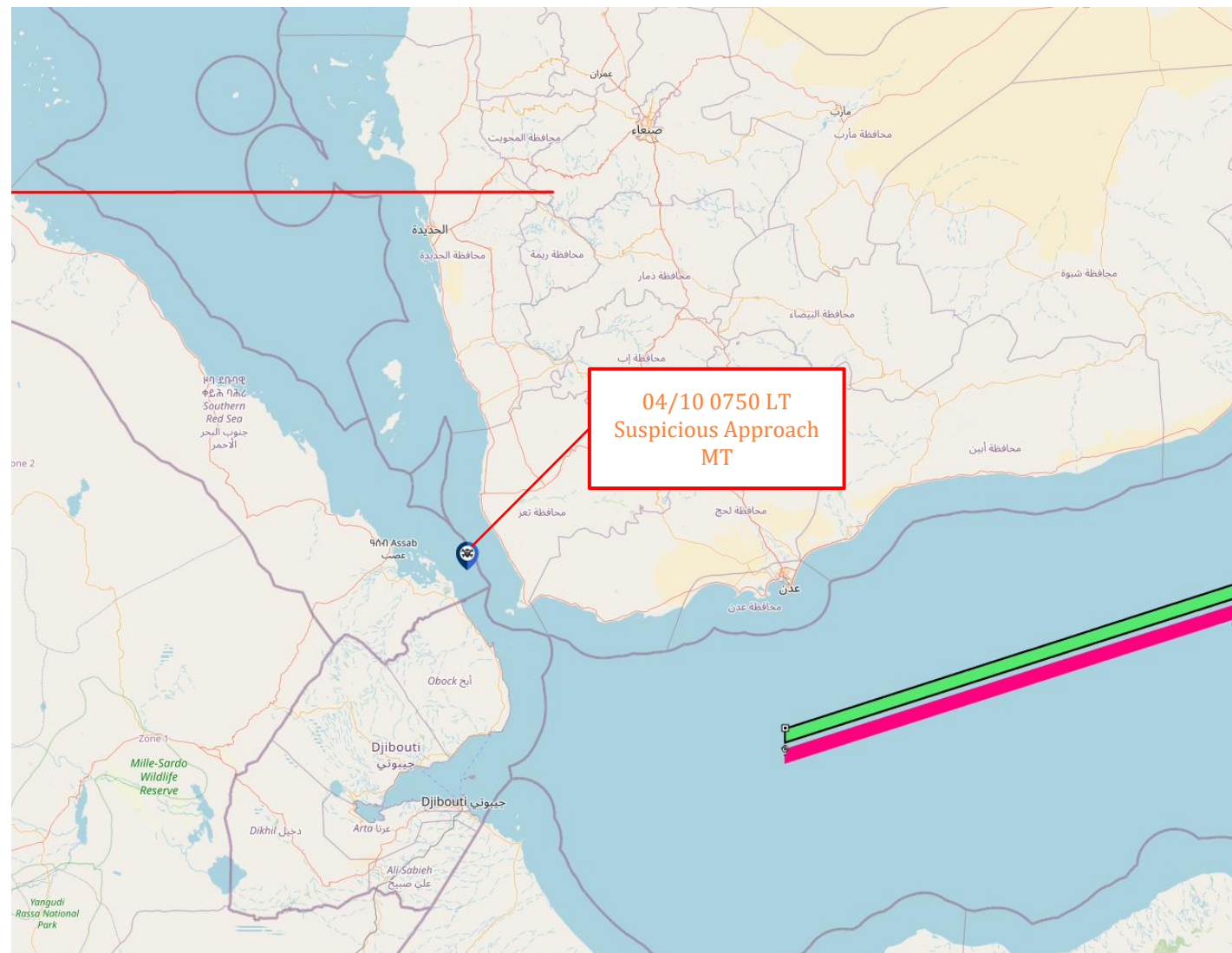
approximately 13 nautical miles west of Mokha, Offshore Yemen, on 18th September. A similar number of POB were observed on board two skiffs approaching the vessel, which later quickly altered course after members of the vessel's AST revealed their weapons. In both cases, the immediate draw back by those on board the skiffs, following the implementation of various deterrence measures on the part of the vessels' Masters and crew members, stands to suggest that the incidents were not related to piracy, as most pirate action groups (PAG) typically exhibit a more robust level of intent when approaching a potential target. Rather, the two events are more likely linked to artisanal fishing offshore Yemen and Eritrea, and fall within historically established trends observed in the surrounding seas areas. Furthermore, reports indicated that crew members had not identified any ladders or weapons on board the skiff during the 04th October approach.

Saudi-led coalition announces interception of three BBIEDs in Southern Red Sea

Separately, the Saudi Arabia-led military "Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen", announced on 06th October that its forces had identified and subsequently destroyed three boat-borne improvised explosive devices (BBIEDs) in the Southern Red Sea, that were suspected to have been launched from Yemen's Hodeidah governorate. A spokesperson for the Coalition stated that the operation was carried out in aims of protecting critical shipping lanes linked to global trade and maritime navigation. While the statement did not specifically identify those responsible for the attempted attack, Coalition forces have repeatedly accused the Yemen-based "Ansar Allah" (Houthi) group of launching such devices against both military and commercial targets in the Red Sea.

Indian Ocean – Incident Map

Inside Reporting Period



Indian Ocean – Incident Map

2021



RED: High-Risk Area (HRA) as designated by [BIMCO](#) et al

GREEN: Voluntary Reporting Area (VRA) as designated by [MSCHOA](#)

YELLOW: Listed Areas as designated by the [IWC](#)



Gulf of Guinea – Analysis

Within the reporting period:

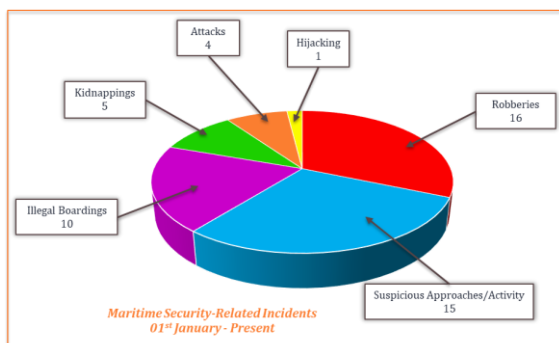
NIL

Outside the reporting period:

NIL

Analysis

The total number of maritime security-related incidents recorded within the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) remained at 51 thus far in 2021, as no additional incidents were recorded during the week under review.



As depicted in the chart above, the majority of these incidents are classified as low-impact, largely made up of a high number of non-violent robberies and low-tier occurrences such as suspicious approaches and illegal boardings.

Moreover, a continued trend in the spatial distribution of incidents recorded in waters offshore West Africa during the third quarter was noted. Piracy-related activity over the same time period in 2020 observed a greater concentration of incidents offshore Nigeria, whereas in 2021, a notable operational shift by malcontents southward towards the waters of São Tomé and Príncipe and offshore Gabon, as well as sporadic maritime-related incidents offshore Cameroon, Ghana and Nigeria, was recorded.

Despite the decline in the frequency of maritime security incidents in the waters offshore Nigeria, there remains an elevated risk of piracy, hijackings, illegal boardings, and attacks, to mariners transiting the seas areas, as demonstrated by the 28th September kidnapping within the Delta Waterways.

The overall maritime threat environment in the region remains volatile with pirate actions groups (PAG) periodically demonstrating their operational capabilities and involvement in organised and semi-organised criminal activity. On 28th September, unknown gunmen opened fire on four separate fishing vessels along the waterways near Ibaka, Akwa Ibom State. Up to four fishermen, including three Ghanaian nationals and one Nigerian national, were abducted from the scene, while outboard engines from the vessels were also stolen. Additional reports indicated that the assailants had demanded an NGN 2.5m (USD 6,046) ransom payment to secure the release of the victims. While no casualties were reported during the incident, the threat of violence cannot be dismissed as perpetrators have been reported to often carry weapons during kidnappings-for-ransom.

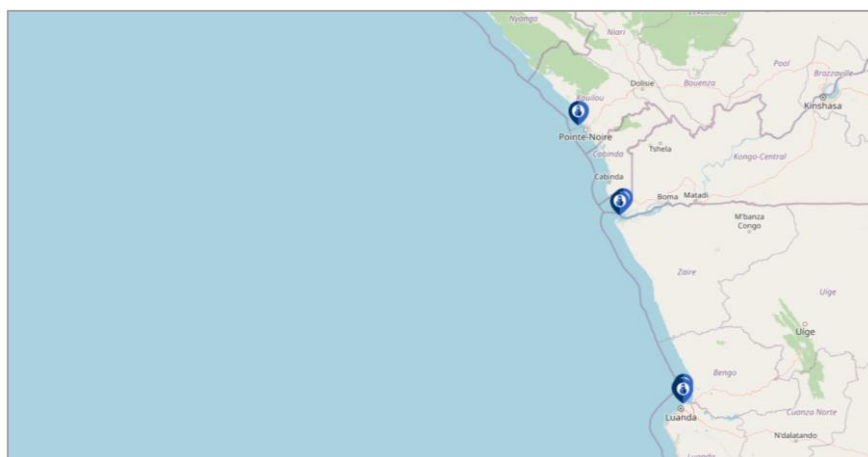
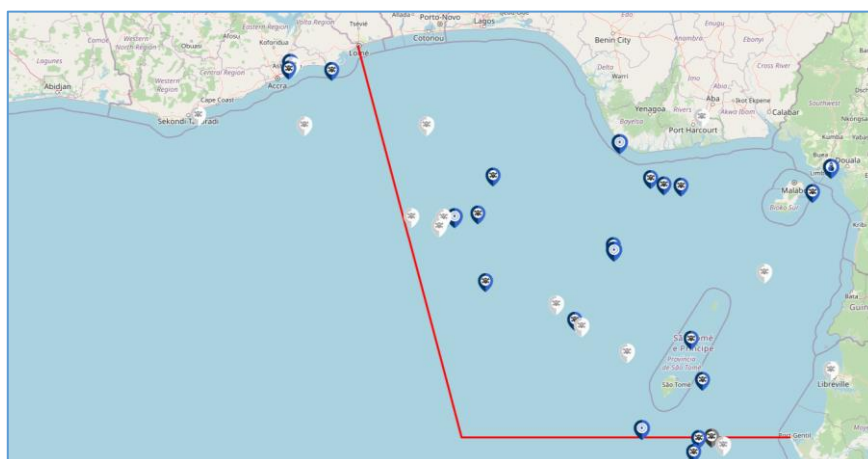
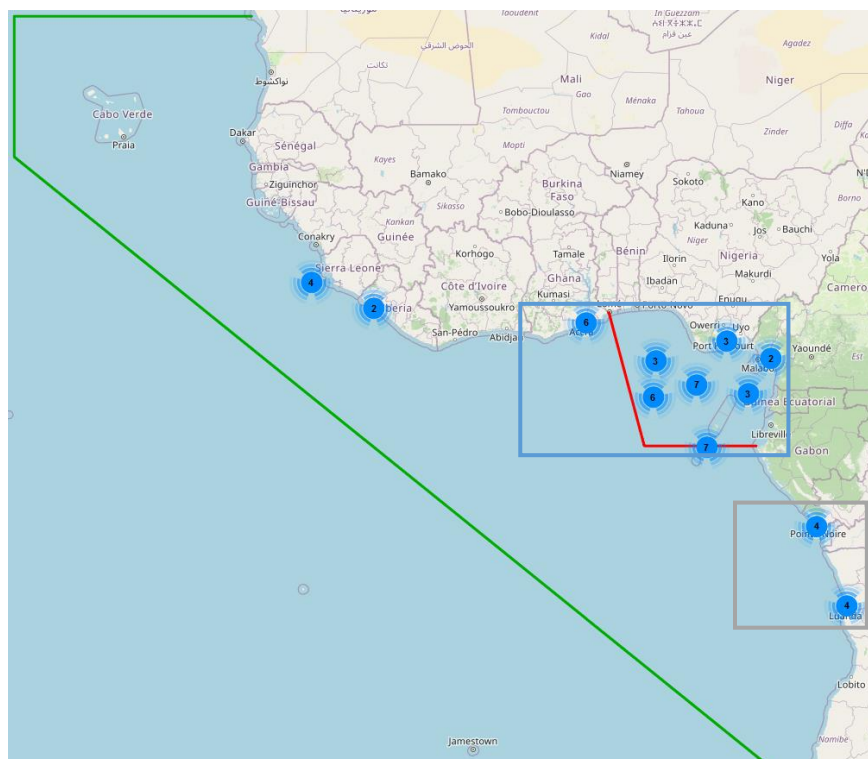
As such, seafarers are reminded that piracy-related activity targeting large commercial vessels at Anchorage or underway through northern Zone D, Zone E, and eastern Zone F of the GoG, remains a credible threat despite a reduction in overall incident numbers in the past several months.

UK deploys HMS TRENT to GoG for maritime security support mission

On 05th October, the United Kingdom (UK) Royal Navy announced that it has tasked its HMS TRENT patrol vessel to be deployed to the GoG seas areas to participate in the French-led multinational Naval drills under 'Exercise Grand African Nemo'. The HMS TRENT will be involved in a series of simulations aimed at developing key cooperative maritime skills between littoral states in the region. The crew of the HMS TRENT will also conduct official visits to Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Gambia, and Cape Verde during their deployment to the region.

Gulf of Guinea – Incident Map

2021



Southeast Asia – Analysis

Within the reporting period:

NIL

Outside the reporting period:

21st September – Illegal Boarding – MAERSK
CAELUM – Balikpapan Anchorage Area –
Makassar Strait – Offshore Indonesia – 01° 35 N
/ 117° 00 W – 1518 LT / 0718 UTC

Incident Summary

21st September – A single perpetrator attempted to board an anchored oil/chemical tanker identified as the Danish-flagged MAERSK CAELUM (IMO: 9724582) in Zone A of the Balikpapan Anchorage Area, offshore Indonesia, in the Makassar Strait, at around 1518hrs local time (0718hrs UTC). The assailant was sighted by a crew member whilst attempting to access the vessel via the anchor hawse pipe. An alarm was subsequently raised, prompting the perpetrator to abandon the vessel, escaping on board a nearby craft. The vessel and crew were reported as safe.

Analysis

The reporting period saw one incident recorded outside the reporting period on 21st September. Following the common trend of illegal boardings in the region, a single perpetrator attempted to board the anchored Danish-flagged MAERSK CAELUM oil/chemical tanker, however, upon sighting a crew member, an alarm was raised and the perpetrator abandoned the vessel, escaping on a board a nearby craft. So far this year in 2021, there have been 19 illegal boardings in South East Asia. The majority of these however, occur in the vicinity of the Singapore Strait, the highlighted illegal boarding this week marking an irregularity, as the only of such type incident to be reported in the Makassar Strait this year.

Tensions continue to rise between China and other international in the South China Sea

As HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH entered the South China Sea on 04th October, it has scheduled multiple training operations with ships and aircraft carriers from the United States (US), Japan, Australia, Canada

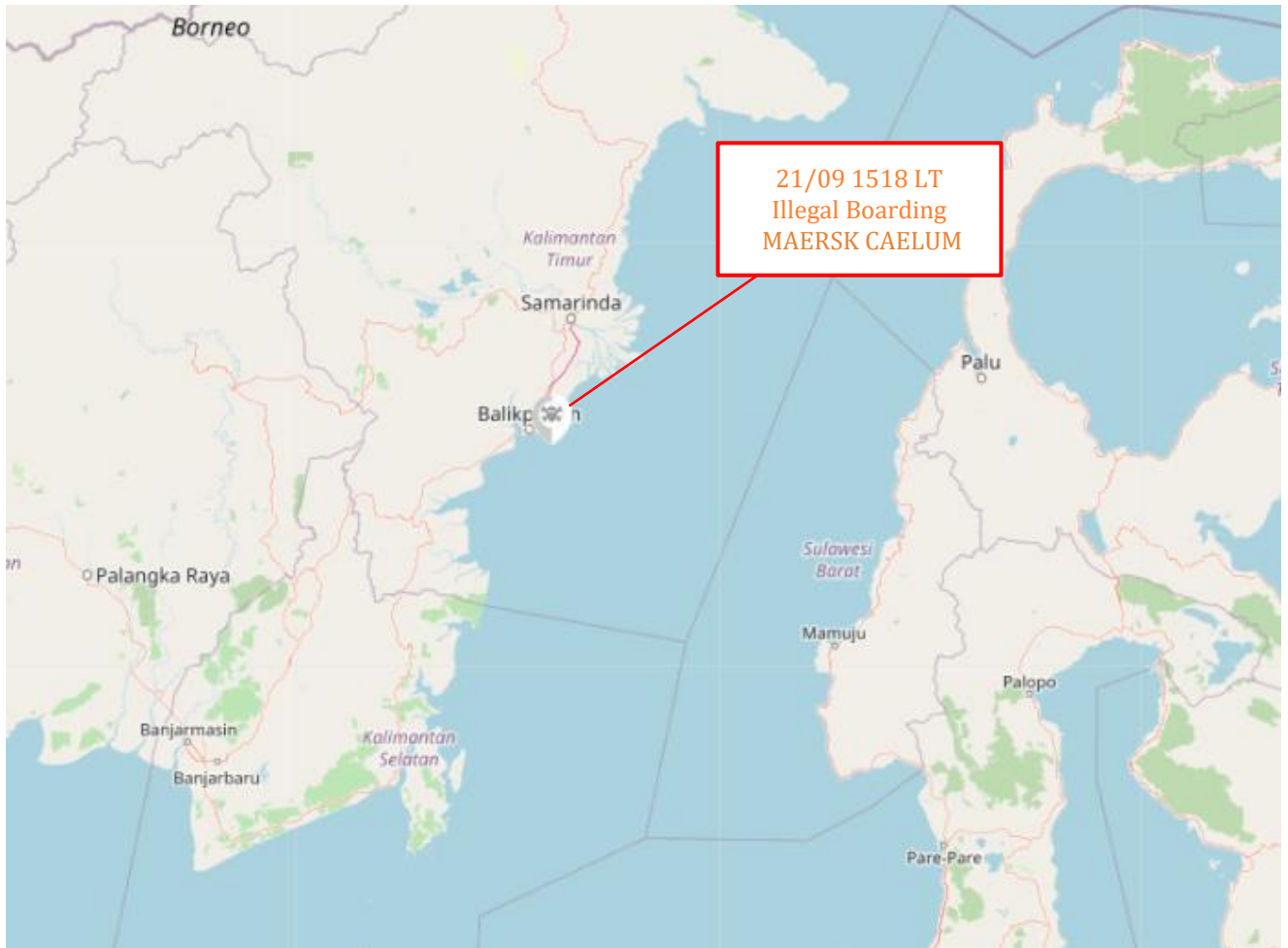
and New Zealand for 12th October. This is the second such type of exercise between the United Kingdom (UK) and allied naval groups in the last two-week period, following two days of exercises in the western Pacific, in the seas east of Taiwan and southwest of Okinawa, Japan.

However, as partnership between these countries has increased, tensions with China have also intensified, with China perceiving these exercises ultimately as a threat. Consequently, as the US and UK carrier groups traversed into the South China Sea, there was a surge in Chinese military flights in the Bashi Channel, with 56 aircraft reported to have crossed Taiwan's air defence identification zone by midnight. Similarly, on 05th October, satellite imagery showed that Chinese military vessels belonging to the People's Liberation Army Navy's (PLAN) South Sea Fleet, had been deployed to follow the British and American aircraft carriers ahead of the six-nation exercise later this month.

Elsewhere in the South China Sea, tensions arose between the Malaysia and China despite initial close ties earlier in the year, particularly in the battle to fight the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). On 04th October, the Malaysian government held a meeting with China's ambassador, Ouyang Yujing, to officially protest against China's alleged violation of international maritime law when the presence of Chinese vessels, including a survey ship, was spotted off the coast of Bornean state, within the country's exclusive economic zone. The act has been accused of violating the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and the country's Exclusive Economic Zone Act of 1984.

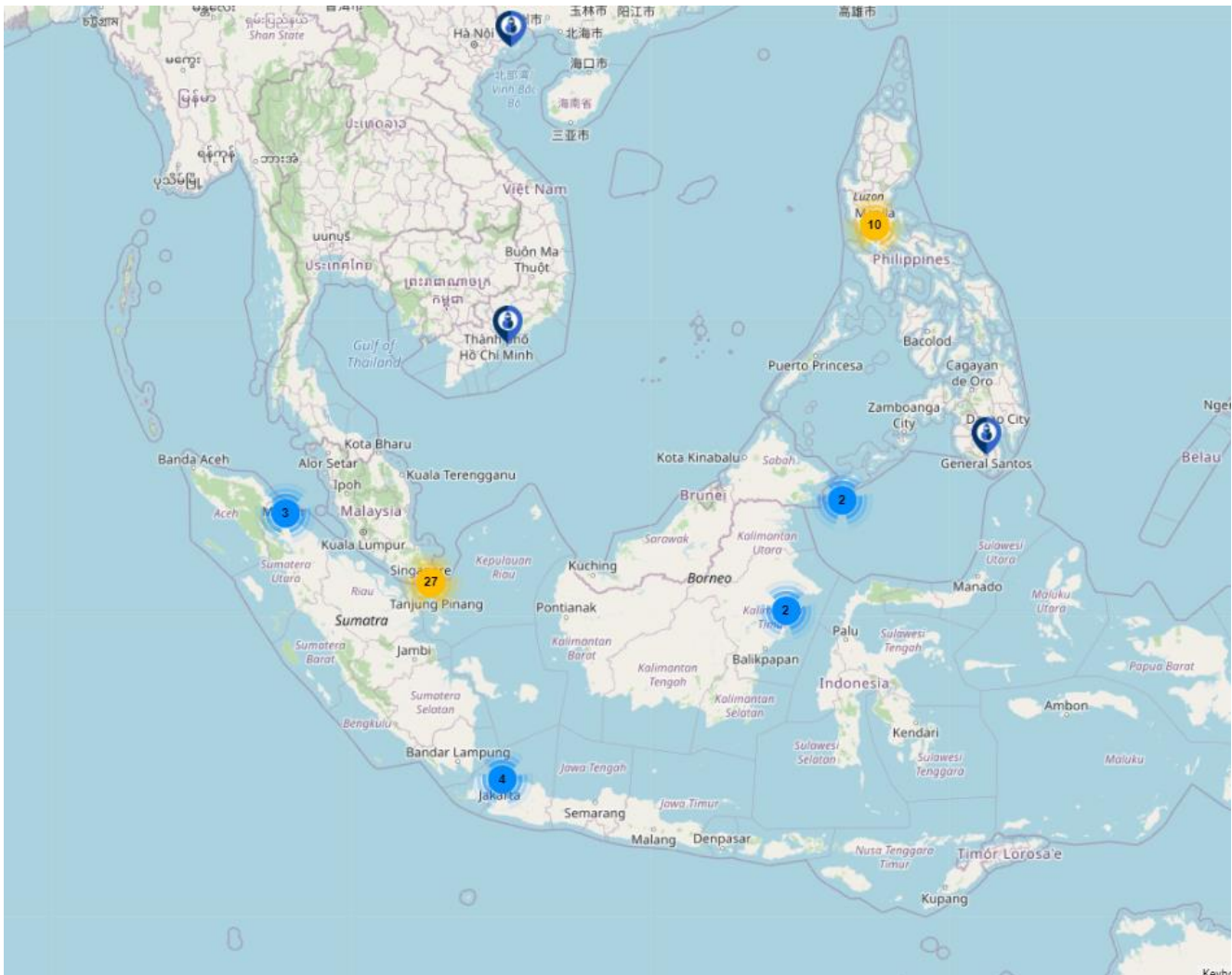
Southeast Asia – Incident Map

Outside Reporting Period



Southeast Asia – Incident Map

2021





Significant Maritime Stories

Taiwan criticizes 'largest ever' incursion by Chinese air force

During the reporting period, Taiwan criticised an incursion by the Chinese 'People's Liberation Army Air Force' into Taiwan's territory as the former marked the founding of the People's Republic of China on 01st October. On this day, China's Air Force flew 38 aircrafts including 18 J-16s, four Su-30 fighter jets, two H-6 bombers, one anti-submarine aircraft, 10 J-16s, 2 H-6s and an early warning aircraft. A total of 148 Chinese Air Force aircrafts flew in Taiwan as of 04th October, marking it the largest ever "incursion" into Taiwan. The last incursion took place in June, with China deploying 28 aircrafts into Taiwan. Taiwan complained about China's "over the top" military manoeuvres and deployed its own fighter jets to monitor the Chinese aircrafts. China flew its aircrafts in the vicinity of Pratas Islands in northern South China Sea, as well as into the Bashi Channel which links the Pacific with the disputed South China Sea.

These incursions are seen as a reminder that China considers Taiwan part of its territory. Taiwan on the other hand claims it is a fully autonomous state. Meanwhile, on 07th October, the Chinese state news outlet 'Global Times' raised concerns over the secret presence of United States (US) troops in Taiwan. This was after US officials said a US special-operations unit and a contingent of Marines had been secretly training Taiwanese forces for at least a year, in efforts to enhance Taiwan's defense apparatus amidst concerns over potential aggression by China. Taiwan Defense Minister, Chiu Kuo-Cheng, warned that China would be able to mount a 'full-scale' invasion of Taiwan by 2025. The US is expected to continue supporting Taiwan's military, while at the same time acknowledging the 'One China' policy which recognises Taiwan as part of China's territory.

Nigeria launches in-land military operations to tackle insecurity

On 04th October, the 2 Division of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (AFFRN)

commenced "Operation Still Waters" in six of its states including Edo, Kwara, Ondo, Osun, Ekiti and Oyo, to tackle kidnappings and other security threats in the areas. Some of these states lie on the shores of the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) where pirate action groups (PAGs) are known to operate. However, these operations appear to be largely focused on in-land security threats as opposed to offshore security threats.

The operations will be a collaboration between various security agencies and the army, and will further be based on real time intelligence on extant threats in the respective states, which would subsequently lead to real operations to tackle the threats. These operations are expected to run until 23rd December 2021.

Further security operations that will be held at the same time in the country include 'Exercise Enduring Peace' in North Central Nigeria, 'Exercise Golden Dawn' in the Southeast parts of the country, as well as other operations in the North East and North West regions.

Libyan authorities detain over 4,000 migrants in major security campaign

Between 01st and 02nd October, Libyan authorities conducted a security raid against illegal migrants and drug traffickers in Gargaresh area, located approximately 12 kms west of Tripoli. The campaign saw the arrest of approximately 4,000 individuals, the largest number of migrants arrested at a go. Gargaresh is a well-known transit hub for Middle Eastern and African migrants and refugees seeking to reach Europe. The detained migrants were of various nationalities and were held in a facility known as the 'Collection and Return Center' in Tripoli and other detention centres in areas surrounding Tripoli. Reports from international media covering the security raid, disclosed that one person was killed and 15 others injured as a result of excessive force used by security forces during the operation. The Libyan authorities confirmed that the illegal migrants would be deported to their home countries after appearing in court.

Image of the Week



Panama-flagged EVER GIVEN (IMO: 9811000) docks at Qingdao Shipyard, China, on 04th October for repairs (Source: Twitter)

Appendix



1. Seven-Day Lunar Forecast

[Moon Phases Open Source Calendar](#)

The next full moon will occur on 20th October.

2. Indian Ocean Meteorological and Lunar Outlook

<http://www.buoyweather.com/map/somalia-to-tanzania>

For further meteorological information, please request access to meteorological software from the officer on watch. If it is not available, then SF advises that one requests a copy of the Brown's Almanac from the Bridge. This document contains a guide on how to use it.

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